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The Gleaner 1999-2000

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SAND CASTLES

You built me castles Big, beautiful palaces
With rooms and quarters
To call my own.
You built me castles
And made them real to me.
You gave me all I asked,
Nothing less and nothing more.

Built along the beach My castle stands
For every wandering eye to see
These wonders all my own
Sacred in my fantasy.
Furnished by your gentle words
And carved by your loving hands,
You built me castles,
Built them in all honesty.
But alas, my friend,
The waves came in
And washed my castles out to sea.

Tracy J. Hall

WHERE UNCERTAINTY REPLACES BEING

Fantasize, Visualize See her, inside. Show her to me, Naked to the world. Don't be ashamed. Grasp the beauty that is you Internal resolution, anxiety, procrastination. None of these hold any importance. For I shall see you for who you are. Give me the time ... to expose what is pure in you. Behind the dark, frigid, bleak exterior. an incandescent glow fades to black, in your eyes.

Melicent Salani

FOREVER AND A DAY

In my room, sitting with you.

Nothing else seems to matter

I am completely at peace,

-Lost in your eyes

Allowing my innermost, hidden

thoughts and feelings to

Fly freely around us,

~~Like delicate butterflies showing

off their new wings in the first days of Spring.

Looking at you,

~Your expressions as I let

myself unfold,

I know there is nothing more

I could want.

In you I have found myself,

All that I am:

All that I want to be

With you, I have learned to

Lighten my heart, Laugh with sincerity,

And hold on to hope.

Hope that we will be the couple who enjoy each other's company until the end of time.

Every day, I fall more into

The bottomlessness that is love

I see you and my heart jumps.

I am lost out in the cold, in the rain,

drowning myself in stress and fears

And it is you who shows me warmth

And gives me shelter in your arms.

No words could ever begin to touch upon the extent to which

I love you.

I just wish you could know How happy you make me.

You are my piece of

heaven on earth-

~a taste of what is in store

Please remember always

that you are mine

as I am yours-

Forever and a day

I love you!

-KatieAnn

FAVORABLE MUTATION Robin Goldblum

The sterile air that swirled around the laboratory had an almost metallic taste to it. Everything in sight was dull white, from floor to ceiling, counter to counter, and all the machines. It was the best color to detect dirt and chemical spills. The only color marring the perfect whiteness was from the large metal casks of liquid nitrogen housing the cryopreserved embryos and tissue cultures.

Lab technician Shannon Johnston watched as her coworker, Aaron Cranage, very carefully pipetted 5.00 mL of media. In their line of work, accuracy was extremely important. One slip-up could lead to contamination, effectively destroying the entire experiment. Aaron finished with his tissue culture and stuck the petri dish in the incubator. When he saw Shannon looking at him, he obnoxiously stuck his tongue out.

"You know, the bacteria on your tongue could contaminate this entire lab," she stated. "How very romantic," he said with a disgusted look on his face. "Where's the mad

scientist?"

It took Shannon a moment to realize he was talking about their boss, Dr. Garner. 'Mad scientist' was an apt description. His slivery hair flew in all directions; some believing it had never seen the teeth of a comb. His smudged glasses only accentuate the hugeness of his eyes. It seemed he tried to keep his face clean-shaven, but usually by the end of the week he had quite a lot of stubble. The clothes he wore were always rumpled and frequently stained. His conversations were one-sided, with him spouting on and on about his current project in words only a person with an advanced degree could understand. Yet, for all his faults, he was an extremely intelligent and caring man.

Shannon shrugged, "I have no idea where Dr. Garner is, but doesn't he seem

tight-lipped about this new experiment?"

Come to think of it, I haven't had to look up any scientifically impossible words

yet this month. Do you know what he's up to?"

"All I know is that the project is being funded by an independent corporation. I heard the name when they initially contacted us. It had 'on the Coast' as part of the name, but I can't remember the rest of it. They apparently have had no success at other labs with whatever they are trying to do so they came to get Dr. Garner's expertise," she explained.

"Sounds fishy to me." Aaron glanced at his watch. "I've got to run down to pick up. The specimens from the local supplier should be here by now. I've got to get those tissue samples into cold storage before they defrost. Bye!" he waved as he ran out the door.

"See ya. Hey, I think I'll ask Dr. Garner what's going on next time I see him!" she

yelled after him.

"Let me know what you find out!" he called back from halfway down the hallway.

Two Days Later

Shannon watched lazily as her cells spun in the centrifuge. Normal routine work like cell counting for viability was all she had to occupy her time since Dr. Garner had not let her in on the new project. She knew he had to journey into the lab eventually today to get the updated progress reports, and she intended to be there when he arrived. If she asked just right, she knew he would never be able to resist letting her in on the secret.

As her cell counter clicked away, she heard the door open very quietly into the room.

The shuffling noises behind her told her that the intruder was trying to remain unnoticed. Shannon stopped the clicking. "Dr. Garner?" she asked without turning around.

The shuffling stopped and a good-natured voice spoke out. "Ah Shannon, you

caught me. I was just sneaking in to get those reports without disturbing you."

Shannon turned to find him in his usual attire of baggy, oversized gray pants and a wrinkled plaid shirt. His favorite lab coat was no longer white but a pale yellow. A blue chemical stain was splashed absentmindedly across the front and the bottom was frayed and torn. He had a pair of eye goggles stuck in his front pocket and a sealed test tube in his hand. He placed the tube on the desk as he routed around for the progress reports.

She took a deep breath. "Dr. Garner, do you have anything for me to work on with the

new project?"

A sad look crossed his face before he answered. "Alas, the project is top secret as desired by the contractors. All I can tell you is that the work we are doing is revolutionary!" His face brightened. "I promise that if this research succeeds, I shall personally show you the results. It may take a long time. Are you up for the wait?"

"Definitely," she said as he grabbed the reports and left. It was a moment before she realized he'd left the sealed test tube lying on the desk. She picked it up and rushed out the

door, but it was too late. He was gone.

She walked back in the lab, the tube gently held between her fingers. Thoughts on what to do with it floated through her mind. She knew that the correct procedure was to call the main lab and have them report the mistake to Dr. Garner. Unfortunately, her curiosity was dangerously gnawing at her brain. Before she could stop herself, she unwrapped a sterile pipette and drew up 0.001 mL of the unknown liquid. As she focused the microscope on the cells, images of the end of her career swam in front of her eyes. Yet, it was too late to turn back now. The deed had already been done.

She slid the microscope lens in place for higher magnification and observed the cells. There was not an abnormal amount of deformed or irregular cells. Carefully, she got a single cell in the early dividing stages in the center of her view and attempted to count the chromosomes. Whatever these cells were from, it wasn't human, mouse, or rat because the

numbers weren't right.

"What are you doing?"

Shannon jumped at the voice behind her, letting out a high-pitched squeak. "Aaron!"

"What's so interesting that you didn't even hear me come in?" he smiled, his eyes

wandering over to the microscope.

Shannon tensed, knowing he'd get the truth out of her soon enough. Without delaying too much, she blurted out her whole deception. He could have run to the phone and reported her, but instead he said, "Let me see."

As she stepped aside, she said, "You realize that by looking, you are putting your

career in as much jeopardy as mine."

"Understood." He peered in, adjusting the focus for his own eyes. "Wow, this looks like horse DNA." He turned the knob a little more. "There seems to be some mutations though. I can't tell what kind of phenotypic changes will result either. Could be interesting," he said as he got up. "Now you'd better report that thing."

"I will. Thanks Aaron," she said as she disposed of the evidence. Aaron had dis-

pelled some of her fear, but the nagging thought of Dr. Garner's disapproval tugged at her for a long time.

Thirteen Months Later

The warm sun felt delicious on Shannon's back as she walked from the parking lot to the lab. Nothing had ever come of her indiscretion and she'd received a promotion to head lab tech a couple of months back.

"Shannon!" A smile came to her face as a disheveled Dr. Garner rushed out of the lab

towards her. "It's time!"

"Time for what?" she asked confused.

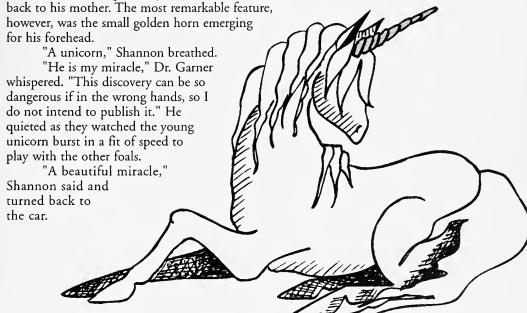
"To view the results of the secret experiment. I have been successful and I never forget a promise." He took her by the arm and they climbed into his car.

For miles she listened as he told her all about his new project, this time not top secret. At one point he turned down a bumpy, dirt road and Shannon wondered just where they were going. They finally stopped in front of an immaculate farmhouse.

"They should be around back," Dr. Garner said as he led her towards the barn.

"There," he said, pointing to the horses.

Shannon moved closer until she was right next to the high wooden fence surrounding a large piece of grassy land. There were a couple of mothers with foals across the field, but the one closest seemed to draw her eyes. It was a well-formed male with a shining white coat. The deep blue eyes flicked over her and then strayed



POLITICS, POWER, AND YOU

How few and highly ceremonial are the occasions in one's lifetime when a new monarch is crowned or laid to rest. The third king of Israel, Solomon, succeeded David, his father, who had succeeded King Saul. His inaugural remarks are highly spiritual in nature-a prayer, if you please-and are recorded in the first book of the Kings of Israel, chapter 8. A reading of the entire chapter recounts many areas of life-social, familial, political, environmental, and international-for which he prays. It is a testimony to spiritual energy.

How different is this occasion from many others throughout history-and even in our nation's own ceremony of witnessing the swearing in of our President. The brief ceremony, during which a Bible may be used, becomes an occasion for a political platform and is followed by extravagant and multiple celebrations.

To lay the groundwork for I Kings 8, we must first examine Deuteronomy 17: 14-20, in which God directed Moses that when Israel does get a king, he is not to multiply horses to himself, nor marry many wives, nor accumulate great amounts of gold and silver. We later see that Solomon violated all of these in spite of his 40-year reign of peace as king. He was to write his own copy of the law and keep it with him.

For the wisest man reputed to have lived and about whom movies have been made, note the tenor of his inaugural prayer in I Kings 8: instead of its being a political agenda, it is a prayer, instead of promoting self-interest or political aggrandizement, it honors God; instead of being offered by a priest or rabbi, it is offered by the monarch himself-King Solomon-in the temple which he built for the LORD.

In the several divisions of verses in this chapter King Solomon addresses various focuses:

- Verse 31, "When someone wrongs his neighbor and his contrition brings him before God, then forgive him."
- Verse 33, "When the nation has been defeated by an enemy because of wrongdoing, and it comes in contrition to seek supplication from God, then hear the people and forgive them."
- Verse 35, "When there is drought because of the nation's wrongdoing and the people turn back to God, then hear them and send rain."
- Verse 37, "When a famine or disease plagues the land, and the people call on God, then forgive them and heal them."
- Verse 41, "When the foreigner hears of God's fame and visits the land and prays toward this temple, then grant them their requests."
- Verse 46, "When Israelis sin against God and are taken captive by an enemy and have a change of heart toward God, then hear their prayer and forgive them."

After making all these personal, political, environmental, health-related, and globally-related petitions to God, he pronounces in verse 59 and 60, "May these words of mine which I have prayed before the LORD be near to the LORD our God day and night, that He may uphold the cause of his servant and his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other."

After the ceremony and prayer ended, the king blessed the people, threw a party that lasted two weeks, and then everyone went to his own house. Later, when a foreign monarach-the Queen of Sheba-paid Solomon a visit and saw his zoo, the temple, and servants, she was impressed and said, "I never even heard the half of it!"

Ode to an Abusive Ex
I mant to see your face
Cause you're still so beautiful to me
But looking at your eyes
Washes me in memories
I see your eyes all smiley
And full of love for me
I see your eyes all angry
And full of hatred and envy.

I want to smash your face in
And ground it in broken glass
Then maybe you won't seem so smug
And so hateful and so gorgeous
And so envious and so mean
And everything you always/never were.

So I'll put my blinders on
So that I don't have to see you
Cause the hurt's so bad
And the hate's so much
And if I see you smirking
At me one more time
I'll either crumble...
Or explode!

Why can't you get out of my life?

EAL



Christine Babler

DREAMS ARE...

Dreams are happy or sad. They can be scary or relaxing. Dreams can be visions of times to come, Or memories of past experiences. Dreams are wishes or anxieties. They can be real or made up. In any direction they go or any path they take Sometimes you are glad they are there, Others you're not sure how to feel. Giddy as a school girl or as blue as the moon. Sometimes you get hurt, expecting results that just never appear or you smile with the outcome. Once the dream is planted it grows a tree, A tree of hope and love and desire.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

There are times when I wish I didn't know how to grieve or feel pain When people die,
I wouldn't understand
So I wouldn't cry.

I wouldn't know what it's like
To cry because I wouldn't feel empathy
For people and their families.

I wouldn't be able to fathom Crying during a beautiful song Or even cry when I'm happy.

I wouldn't be able to feel sadness
Or despair for people
That are close to me when they feel sad,
Or happy,
Or when they die.

These are all nice things in theory
But feeling and having emotions are part of living,
At least they're part of me.
Through it all this is what I'd want myself to be.

Having feelings is part of being human It's what makes us special.
If God didn't want us to feel,
He would've made everything perfect,
Because bad things happen, and He
Would've made everyone the same.
But he was smarter than that,
He made people imperfect and emotional.
So God even made ignorant people.

-in loving memory of Mike Napoli

a hand reaches from amidst the gentle darkness a darkness that we all fear. but cannot avoid. this boy's hand grasps the strong hand of a father and he steps into the light no longer afraid. he takes his first steps and embraces his new life. he no longer feels pain. nor suffers. feeling only the warmth. and love. which shall forever surround him. he shall spend his forever years in this wonder where all his dreams may be touched. this boy is not alone. he is now embraced fully openly, by the one who will eventually embrace us all. the days become years and we all are reunited once again. so this goodbye is only temporary. so dearly will you be missed. and this pain will dull allowing our hearts to remember your devotion, and love. and we will dance among the memories of yesterday where only flowers now remain.

-Shannon Clements

Once upon a time

By: April Knehr

I loved you once,
And you didn't have love for me....
But know that I have moved on,
You have found a love for me.
You say it is because I have changed....
If you truly love me,
Thy did I have to change for you to Love me?
That's wrong with the real me?

BIRTH OF A SUPERHERO PART 1

by David Molettiere

Finished on February 9,2000

October 31, evening

A battered, brown Ford LTD pulled up to the front of the Wild Turkey Kicker Club and stopped, despite not being in a parking space, with its lights on. A woman dressed in an elaborate banana costume stumbled out of the front seat, awkward in her outfit.

"When I find that no-good father of yours, I'm gonna.. .Oh, I don't know, but it's not going to be very pretty," she commented in the direction of the back seat.

"I wanna come with you," whined a young boy who now sat alone in the car. He was dressed in his favorite costume ever, that of the blue Power Ranger.

"No, dear, this is an adult party. It's not suitable for you. Just eat your candy and I'll be right back." With that, she headed towards the entrance.

Timmy hated it when his mother left him alone like this. Still, he did have a rather large haul from his trick-or-treating activities earlier in the evening. After several minutes, he had eaten all the best pieces of his candy, and his mother still had not yet returned. He pulled his mask back down and began to pretend that he was really a Power Ranger. "Go, Go, Power Ranger," he started to sing repeatedly, with great exuberance, but with no skill. After several more minutes had passed, he decided that a Power Ranger doesn't need to stay in the car. He unbuckled his seatbelt and opened the door. He looked around, as if expecting his mother to come screaming at him for disobeying her orders. She was nowhere in sight. Then, he rushed towards the door his mother had entered. Just as he brushed past some adults, all whom were trying to slow him down, he heard a loud voice say something about "fakes"...

November 4th, morning

Sean awoke, and with a just-waking forgetfulness, was again surprised by her surroundings, her clothes, and most of all her body, until her memory of the past few days came back to her. The memory of how she had been transformed at the Wild Turkey Kicker Club. 'I don't have to sleep,' she thought to herself, 'so why do I continue to go to bed every night?' She realized that force of habit might have something to do with it. However, she was afraid that this was a sign of depression, that she was unwilling to face life as a super hero, and therefore wasted time each night to sleep. 'This has to change. Perhaps, I'll start a nightly patrol over the city... '

As she mulled things over, she wandered around the apartment, noticing that Sherry was gone. She found a note that read, "Sorry I couldn't stick around till you woke up, but I have a class to attend. See ya later, Sherry." Classes! Sean hadn't even thought about what to do about classes yet. Her only class on Mondays was a course in Ancient Greek taught by Dr. Drysdale. She was never good about attending this class, as she had always been able to learn the material

without the lecture. 'In fact,' she thought, 'I may not need to worry much about my classes at all.' To test her theory, she rummaged around and found her Greek book. Quickly skimming it, she found that she could easily recall anything that she spent even a few seconds glancing at. 'I think I won't be attending class today,' she thought to herself with a smile, and then flew out the open window to enjoy the sunny day.

November 4th, evening

'Well, that was certainly a nonproductive day,' Sean thought to herself as she flew back towards the apartment. Still, she felt she deserved some time off from school and other hassles after recent events. She knew skipping school didn't exactly make her a good role model but how could she explain to her classmates, her teachers, or her roommate Fred in the dorms? Later, she thought to herself. These were worries for another time. Perhaps later in the week she would be prepared to tell the world about her change. Perhaps for now she could at least enjoy her newfound powers without fear or shame.

Such were her thoughts as she flew in through the open window of the apartment that she and Sherry now shared. As Sean entered, Sherry looked up from the table where she was seated, surrounded by a small pile of textbooks, notebooks, and loose paper.

"Oh, hi, how was your day?" Sherry asked.

"Oh, very relaxing. I know I shouldn't have missed classes, but still..."

"Don't worry about it," Sherry replied. "I found a copy of your schedule and talked to your teachers. They were very understanding when I told them about your change."
"Y-you told them?" Sean sputtered, realizing that her secret was no longer so secret.

"Of course. I thought you might feel a little uncomfortable about telling everyone, so I did it for you. I also got a list of homework assignments.. .it's in here somewhere," Sherry continued as she dug through a pile of papers. "Anyway, your dorm-mate, Fred, said that he was worried when you didn't come back to your dorm room after the Halloween party and all. Don't worry, a lot of students were transformed, so the administration is making special arrangements for all of us. I made sure that your name was added to the list that they've got down at the dean's office."

'Great, now everybody knew. Everyone on campus, anyway. God, I wonder if my mom will hear about it. Gahh,' she thought to herself. Sean was floored by the news, and tried to think of something to say, when there was a knock on the door.

Sherry said, "Oh, that'll probably be Steve. He and I are going out tonight. I hope you don't mind me leaving you alone again?"

'A date? She's going out with another guy?' Sean thought. Then realized, no, she's not going out with another guy. Sean began to realize he'd lost more than his genitals when he was changed; he had lost Sherry. Who could blame her? After all, if Sherry had turned into a guy, Sean wouldn't have wanted to date her anymore.

Sherry opened the door, revealing Steve, who stepped inside. They hugged and then Sherry said, "Steve, I'd like you to meet my roommate, Sean; Sean, meet Steve." Sean looked up at Steve, a tall athletic-looking guy with a blonde crewcut.

"Uh, nice to meet you," Sean responded more out of instinct than truth.

"Yeah, you too. Who would have ever thought you were a guy? Man, you're gorgeous," Steve replied as his eyes wandered from Sean's bare legs to her chest. Sherry elbowed him gently in

the ribs.

"Who's gorgeous?" she demanded, with a sarcastic smile.

"Oh, of course you are, honey, but jeez, I've never seen a guy I'd want to have sex with before." Steve's gaze returned to Sherry to answer her, but returned almost uncontrollably to stare at Sean.

"Yes, well, if you want to ever have sex with this girl again, you'd better start paying attention to me," Sherry responded mirthfully. "And on that note," Sherry continued, turning to Sean, "we'll see you later. Don't wait up." Then Steve put an arm around Sherry and they walked out.

'So,' Sean thought, 'this is the way things are. Sherry doesn't, probably can't, love me. And men... they want me. They'll all see me as nothing but breasts and legs.' Sean collapsed to the floor, sobbing. After a few minutes, she realized that she was sitting next to a large pile of comics that Sherry had conjured up, some that even Sean hadn't read. Scooping up the pile, she took them to her private little Fortress of Solitude, realizing now how appropriate that name might be. Soon afterwards, she put down the comics and started to think about how this mess was started.

October 18th, mid-day

It was a day like any other day in mid-October. The weather was beginning to turn cold, and the leaves were beginning to change colors. Overcast grey skies loomed overhead, and Sean felt the need to go out and do something. So, he got in his car and drove to the mall. For a while, he wandered aimlessly, seeking whatever he could find. He sighed when he saw Christmas decorations beginning to be displayed prominently.

"Can't they even wait till after Halloween?" he muttered to himself. Then he noticed the Halloween Store. From outside, he could see hints of odd masks and costumes and was drawn inside by his innate curiosity.

As he picked through what was there, he saw little out of the ordinary. He half expected a salesperson to show him to a back room, where he would find costumes of a more fantastic, possibly magical nature, but such was not to be. Then, he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned, not knowing what horrid sight might await his eyes. Yet, no monstrosity was there, no slavering demon or drooling monster. Instead of some repugnant terror, he saw an attractive saleswoman who looked oddly familiar.

"Hi, can I help you?" she began, and then paused, staring at him. "I've seen you before, haven't I? On the college campus?"

"Uh, yeah, I think so. I'm Sean." He stared back at her lovely face and was awe-struck by her beauty.

"Hi, I'm Sherry." As she spoke, he noticed her nametag supported her claim. "Are you just looking around?" she asked.

Sean replied, "Well, I was thinking of maybe getting this," pulling a Superman costume off the rack, "but I don't have either the physique or the hair for it." He brushed aside his long blonde hair to emphasize this point.

"Hmmm, let's see what we've got," she replied, flipping through the racks of costumes. Sean wasn't sure what she was looking for, he had already seen everything on the rack. Perhaps she was looking for a Hercules costume; he had seen the Hercules and Xena costumes based on the TV shows, but neither really suited him.

"Ah, here we go," she commented, pulling out a costume. "How about this? Your hair would go well with this one."

He saw that she had pulled out a Supergirl costume. He wasn't quite sure what to say and didn't want to offend her. "Are you serious?" he asked her.

"Yeah, I don't see why not. Guys dress up as girls on Halloween all the time, and you're thin enough that you could probably pull it off." He hesitated, thinking it over, but was still going to say no when she asked, "Do you have any plans for Halloween?"

"Well, no, but..." he started to say.

"Then, I'll tell you what. Why don't you meet me here on Halloween, about 5 o'clock. That's when I get off work. Then, I can help you with your costume, and we can go to this club I know where they're holding a costume contest. Okay?" She spoke with confidence. Once again, Sean hesitated, staring at the costume, wondering if he could bear to be seen in public wearing the costume. Sherry misinterpreted this pause, thinking he was looking at the price tag, and said, "I'll even buy your costume for you. Well, how about it?"

Well, he couldn't fight it anymore. He realized that an attractive woman was effectively asking him out on a date while offering to buy him the costume, which he might have wanted anyway (as a collectible, if not as a costume). "Sounds great," he answered truthfully, but wondered if he would really have the nerve to go along with it. They talked for a few minutes more, getting to know each other better, until finally he made some excuse and left.

Week before Halloween

Sean didn't see Sherry again during the days before Halloween. As the days passed, he began to anxiously anticipate this date, much as a child would do for Christmas. Yet, he never stopped to think for very long about the costume that he would be wearing.

October 31st, mid-day

When the day of Halloween finally arrived, Sean drove to the mall around 1:00, not wanting to be late. He ended up roaming the mall with little to do, but figured that it was better than being late. Wasting a lot of time, Sean browsed through the bookstores and played games at the video arcade, but he began to grow restless. Finally, he looked at his watch and it read 4:30, so he headed over towards the Halloween Store. He waited outside, out of sight, not wanting to seem too desperate by arriving too early.

Finally at 4:55, he walked into the store. Sherry was there, waiting on customers. When she saw him, she waved and told him that she would be a few minutes. He watched her ring up some purchases until one of her coworkers took over for her. Then, she beckoned him to follow her. They left out the rear of the store, passing through a small employee's lounge where she picked up a bag with a receipt stapled into its top. They headed towards the parking lot. Sherry led Sean to her car, and he got in while she put the package in the trunk.

"I figured we'd go by my apartment first, get dressed, and then go out. You don't need to stop by your place for anything, do you?" she asked.

Sean replied, "No, that's fine."

As she drove, he couldn't help but stare at her. She was so beautiful, with her long black hair and her curvaceous body shown off by her tight mini-dress. After they arrived, she grabbed the bag from the trunk and they walked to her apartment.

Once inside, she pulled out the costume from the bag, and asked him, "Well, do you still want to go through with this?"

One look into her deep, dark eyes, Sean was left without the power to say no. "Sure, let's do it!"

She smiled. "Good, You'll need to shave first, face and legs. There's a razor and a bottle of Nair in the bathroom. You can handle that by yourself, right?"

"Uh, yeah," Sean replied, not realizing all that might be entailed. Sherry pointed to the bathroom, and Sean went inside, closing the door behind him. He stripped off his clothes and applied the Nair to his legs. The cold, white substance shocked him, as he waited for it to do its job. When time came to wash it off, he was surprised at the difference. His legs felt smooth and silky. After shaving his face, he thought about putting his clothes back on, but chose to wear a towel instead.

With only a pink towel wrapped around his waist, Sean opened the door and found Sherry standing there with her costume already on. She was wearing a black dress with sparkles on it, a belt consisting of metallic moons and stars, black fishnet hose, and black high-heeled shoes. She looked at Sean and grinned, "Good, now go into the bedroom and put on the items I have laid out for you. You'll need them to look like a woman." She pointed in the direction of the bedroom.

When Sean went in the room, he found a tight panty-girdle, a pair of fake breasts, a bra, and a pair of red high-heeled shoes. He put on the bra with only a little difficulty, and put the fake breasts in it; it seemed odd to look down and see them sticking out. The panty-girdle, on the other hand, was a bit less comfortable. He could barely pull it up all the way, and it constricted his body, making him become well aware of every breath. His genitals, however, did not fit at all, until he realized that he was supposed to tuck them between his legs. After doing so, with a bit of discomfort, he looked down and saw a very feminine contour.

Sherry walked in, looked him over, and said, "Good, you're ready to put the costume on." She handed him the Supergirl outfit, and looked at it, trying to figure out how it should go on. It came in several pieces: a tie-on red cape, two red "boots", a yellow tie-on belt, and a mini-dress with a built-in red panty. He put it on, with assistance from Sherry, and it just barely fit. It was very tight, showing off every curve of his body. Sean tied the belt around his much thinner waist and the cape around his neck. Then, he looked at the boots, now understanding why Sherry left him a pair of high-heels; the boots were very large and had no bottom except a piece of elastic, allowing them to be worn over any pair of shoes. Sean wondered how Sherry could have guessed his shoe size, but found the shoes only a little too small. His feet were pinched terribly, but they did fit inside. Then he put the boots over them, and he thought he was done.

"Oh good, you're almost ready. Come." She beckoned him over to her makeup table, where he sat down. Sherry explained what she was doing with each step, but Sean paid little attention, due to the fact that this was the first and last time he was ever doing this. Eventually, she applied foundation, blush, blue eye shadow, eyeliner, mascara, and bright red lipstick as Sean day-dreamed about other things.

His daydreams ended suddenly when he felt the pain from Sherry plucking his eyebrows. "Hey!" he commented.

"Hush, they'll grow back," she replied. Several painful minutes later, she proclaimed she was done. He looked in the mirror, expecting to see a beautiful woman, but only saw himself with makeup on.

'I couldn't possibly fool anyone,' he thought as he pondered what reactions people would have towards him. Then Sherry grabbed his right hand, and Sean looked to see her gluing long, red, fake fingernails over his own fingernails. He figured she was done after gluing the fingernails on, but she said that he still needed earrings.

"We'll have to get your ears pierced," she said with a grin.

"What?!"

She smiled. "Just kidding. Here." She handed Sean a pair of red clip-on earrings, which he put on with some help from Sherry. "Now, I think we are ready to go," she told him. Sean stood up, and Sherry grabbed her purse and a witch hat before leading him back to her car. It took Sean several tries to open the door with those long red fingernails.

"How do women put up with these?" he asked. Sherry just shrugged. She drove them to the club she had mentioned before, and Sean noticed a sign proclaiming it to be the "Wild Turkey Kicker Club."

They got out and, as they walked to the door, Sean felt a cool breeze blowing against his bare legs. He noticed other costumes while walking towards the door. Most people were unimaginative, and many were in costumes Sean chose not to buy. The most unusual was probably a woman dressed as an M&M. The others were more standard: a skeleton, a pumpkin, a cow, two people dressed as a horse, a devil lady, a pair of gypsies, a Roman Centurion, and a guy dressed as a table. There didn't seem to be much competition, so Sean still felt he had a chance of winning. When he told Sherry this, she replied that it might help if she told the judges that he was really male.

Sean was surprised. "You mean, you think they won't be able to tell?"

"Of course not. Look." She replied, pointing at the club's window, which was reflective due to the darkness. Sean saw a woman dressed as a witch standing next to a woman as Supergirl and... Sean then realized that, though not as beautiful as Sherry, he looked like a woman. "One thing that's been bugging me, though," she continued, "is, if Superman's home planet of Krypton exploded, where did Supergirl come from?"

A smile crossed Sean's lips as he began to organize the information in his mind in such a way as to explain to a non-comics reader all the pertinent knowledge. He told her of how Argo City survived because of Superman's father's brother, how the inhabitants of the doomed city of Argo had to deal with the ground beneath them turning into Anti-Kryptonite, how Superman's father's brother had a child named Kara Zor-EI who was rocketed to Earth from Argo, how Kara had patterned a costume after Superman whose adventures she watched from Argo City, how she met Superman for the first time, how she became his "secret weapon", how she revealed herself to the public for the first time, and how she died, sacrificing herself for the universe.

"She's dead?" Sherry asked.

"Yeah, in fact, they decided that she never existed. So they created a new version of Supergirl who's not Kryptonian, but that's a whole 'nuther story," Sean stated. He didn't have time to tell this other story, though, because they were now entering the club. They found one of

the few remaining tables and sat down. Sean was amazed at the large number of people packed in such a small place, but it was made more unusual by the vast array of costumes. Harlequins, cavemen, mice-women, zombies, and many other varieties surrounded them. Sean asked Sherry when the contest was going to begin, but she didn't know. So, Sean asked a guy dressed as a Roman Centurion as he passed by their table.

"Contest?" What contest?" he replied, then turned and walked away. Sherry gave Sean an innocent look before confessing that she knew there was no contest. Just as Sean was about to question her further, they were interrupted by a loud voice, proclaiming, "I have had it with this room full of FAKES!!" Then the chaos began. After a lengthy pause, Sean looked down and realized that he had been transformed.

**Author's Note-I have a few more plot lines for this story, but it would have made it too long for this issue of The Gleaner. Stay tuned next semester and keep an eye out for the first issue of The Gleaner for the 2000-2001 school year. Part 2 will be in it as I will finish writing it over the summer break. Part 2 will explain many



questions you may have.**





WHO AM I?

I know what I am
By the tough strands of hair,
Permed each month for easier care.

I know who I am By the thickness of my mouth That I inherited undoubtedly, From my people down South.

I know what I am
By the rhythmic way I walk.
By the timely step I dance,
And the Northern slang I talk.

I know what I am
When I stare at my reflection.
I look into my eyes and almost see perfection.

I know who I am

Not by the color of my skin,
But by the person I've found deep within.

By: Zofia "Princess" Martinez

NONE TO BE GIVEN

This is me, This is who I am. I try to impress. But that doesn't work. I sit and listen. But I'm the only one talking. I gave her my heart. I gave her my time. It was not enough. All the bad things were found, The good ones not discussed. My respect for her. Just a good act. Now, not being close, Our friendship fades. I'm the backup, The one for last minute calls. But I will move on.

Always looking back though. I will remember everything, And hold it locked inside. She will just glide along, Missing something close within her.

INVIDIA

As I walk down the halls,
I can see their smiling faces.
They stare at each other without reprieve.
Holding hands,
My eyes are transfixed.
Their friendship
Would weather the wind of any hurricane.
They mend each other's wounds after each storm,
Despite the howling winds of my jealousy.
All they have,
Is all I lack.
I once had a girl,

But the core of my soul was not enough.
Was it me and a want for a closer friendship?
Or was it both of us that blew out the candle?





PRESSURE

My soul,
Frigid as ice.
My life,
That of a rock.
When something needed,
It is lifted up.
My conscience,
Filled with confusion.
Friends float by,
They'll never understand.
They are just there.

ALL YOU

Sitting on the cement.
Taking in the silence.
The darkness,
What a good cover.
No one will see,
When the tears roll down.
All alone,
Talking to yourself.
This is all you have.
Wishing for things,
Things you can only provide.
What's not right?
Relax, think, glide away.
This is where you're special.

Matthew Hostrander

PRISONER

The heart aches with all your pain, My tears are with you. I feel what you feel. Blue that they are. Your days are golden.

Explaining is the reason. Tradition is the excuse. Heart, tears, love Are seduced by you In a wave of talking lies.

The sun shines brightly
On you and your excuses.
Trust and to think of being near you
Are the clouds in my life.
You are what I must have.
You are what I must avoid.

Sean Dallas

The glow of your sun is fading now. Your brilliant color blends. Painting you is easy By remembering why we became friends.

I heard the train stopped for you. You had your pass to board, And all our yelling and crying at you To wait for us was ignored

The voice said you didn't have time to wave Or say goodbye. I can't imagine why.

The whistle sounds
And you sit in your seat,
Through your window, you look down.
And we think you are gone.
It can't be true, please.

But the name in print confirms it You left, but you'll be back. When we play our games And say your name When we see the reds and blues It will be the same, won't it?

Scaredom is the nastiest word in the world.

Sean Dallas

It haunts you from here to there: It finds you waiting for it to strike. Alone, it rips through every hair, Every night. It is dark and it is failure. It is dangerous and all powerful. It steals from you everything you believe in And a few things you don't. It is the undoing of man And the doing of man. Consumes you, envelops you, drunks you, saddens you, Maddens you, crosses you, overtakes you, teaches you. Scaredom is to be feared And to be steered From. Scaredom is to be heard And not forgotten. And then forgotten Every night.

Sean Dallas



Too Helpless to Take Over

Too weak to write So the mind takes over Too sad to cry So the heart takes over Too numb to hurt So the feelings take over Too tired to fly So the spirit takes over Too small to fight So the feet take over Too dumb to know So the whip takes over Too afraid to love So the bitterness takes over Too down to care So the sandman takes over Too hard to die So the world takes over.

Jodi Paterno

SIMPLE BEAUTY

The strength of one light... Burning The heat of one flame... Melting Simple Beauty Simple Beauty Endlessly changing Time beacons night The sun is reborn As are our souls the collection of light... burns The collection of heat... melts The collection of life... dies The reality of love... overwhelms Shine like the night Cry like the day Take flight Run away White doves are everywhere Seek and you will see White doves are everywhere: As is simple beauty

Jodi Paterno

WONDERS NEVER CEASE WONDER #V

As I think with the mirror
With only letters to confuse me
I wonder why I wonder
Of what I cannot see
His love is so real
That it seems like unreality
So, why do I feel
That I am not worthy
I've done nothing to others
Except give love in return
So why should I be bothered
With letting my heart burn...

Burn with the flame I know will never die Which shall always remain As the sparkle in my eye.



INSOMNIAC'S CAFÉ

The true insomniac leads a very scary life. Most insomniacs make sure their evenings are full of activity, friends, music, dancing, food and other distractions. They are usually the liveliest at parties, trying in a vain attempt to chase away the cobwebs building in their brains. However, unplanned nights are the bane of their existence. Half of them are in their beds, anxiously listening to the various noises of the night. The other half of them watch every infomercial, sitcom rerun, and B movie shown during after-hours television. Both kinds of insomniacs spend the daytime as zombies, trying not to fall asleep at work while downing cup after cup of caffeine-laden coffee.

Among these poor, tired people is a legend of the Insomniac's Café. The myth supposedly began in Kansas, spreading throughout the Midwest, and finally engulfing the entire country. The legend goes that the Insomniac's Café looks just like any normal diner. The upholstery is old and cracked, the counters are stained, and the windows are smudged. Yet, the staff is cheerful and the place is open all night. This is not unusual in any way. The thing that draws insomniacs from miles away is that the café brings the promise of sleep. Even the worst, red-eyed insomniac, who has not had a decent night's sleep for years, gets relief from one meal at the Insomniac's Café. Not one of them knows how or why it works, and most don't care.

The only person who knows the secret of the café is Irma Rakefield, the owner. A good-natured, buxom woman, she always has a smile or a piece of useful advice for everyone. Her spirit lights up the lives of all her patrons. Yet, she discovered a way to never pay an electric bill. With a method never to be revealed or understood by a logical, thinking human being, Irma uses human energy to run her business. As the customers eat and drink, their energy is literally sucked out of them. Many have a hard time actually driving home. For those occasions, Irma maintains a little lounge in the back, complete with couches and cots. It is not unusual to see a person dozing off at a table or the front counter in a peaceful sleep. To top it all off, every person awakens refreshed and happy. It is the true insomniac's dream.

Is it an alien presence feeding off the people's life force? Could is be a Native American curse over that particular piece of land? Perhaps it is a gift from the angel of insomniacs? The only soul that we can get the truth from is Irma, and she happens to be enjoying a nap at the moment.

Robin Goldblum

FOR THE LOVE OF HER

Farewell my love, for I will no longer fight for nothing.

I hope she will satisfy you, for I was put on this earth

only to serve you, not control you.

Your happiness lies with her, and I can't change that.

If it is ever a time when you are not pleased, I'll be here;

Just reach for the stars, whisper to God, and I shall return.

Our times were good, but I guess not enough,

her power over you is too strong.

Remember love endures, as I am love.

Your feelings for her selfishness will soon fade,

and you shall be free...to love...to love me.

Time awaits, and even though each minute feels like eternity,

when it is time for us to be joined again,

the time wasted will only be a few seconds,

for infinity lies ahead, and time will be

of no consideration in love's eyes.

As long as feelings are shared, there is a chance for us.

If our feelings have changed, then this is goodbye...

-----Mook

Background. Because of living and working with Bulgarian people during 1993, 1995, and 1996, I developed a very special and warm empathy with regard to Bulgaria and its people. I learned to appreciate and understand difficulties of Bulgarian lifestyles at urban, village and rural levels. This understanding led to professional and personal ties with very hardy people. A people who are tolerant to agony, hardship, and adversity. A people who boldly endured strife and never lost faith in themselves nor their beloved country. To put into perspective three unique Bulgarian experiences, I wrote the following poem titled "A People Hard, Tolerant, and Bold" as an attempt to portray a summary of my inner feelings that evolved from experiencing a tiny slice of life in a country having a very special people.

A People Hardy, Tolerant and Bold

Bulgaria, a country both young and old, its people hardy, tolerant and bold.

Through centuries they have toiled its rich soils, in times of prosperity, and times of spoils.

Their enduring tenacity continually quests for a path, that one day will lead their beloved country from despair and wrath.

With her lands so vastly diverse and a populace strong willed, labors of the devoted crave to be fulfilled.

As throes of change give rise to anxiety, yet contentment of harmonious livelihoods remain hidden by obscurity.

Sure as the rugged Balkan mountains defiantly retain their majestic beauty, the determination of Bulgarians to mold the face of their great Republic shall thrive for an eternity.

Like reverberating clinking sounds of Sliven's crystal, Bulgarians recognize the vibrant anguish of tribulations for a life immortal.

With faith and hope, persevering Bulgarians untiringly toil to preserve, a heritage that enriches freedoms all Bulgarians deserve.

Bulgaria, a country both young and old, its people hardy, tolerant and bold.

Man on the Moon

She cried when first she saw it, There, headlining the news -"Man walks on the moon -Hooray for all humanity!" While all the world cheered Everywhere around hera She could only watch in silence Wondering at their joy. "One small step for man; One giant leap for mankind." These words echoed in her mind As she wondered what direction That step was taken in, And why such great emotion For a leap towards one's doom. What was this great advancement That took away her youth? Hope and dreams and childhood wishes Lay now like scattered leaves Trailing in the wake of this faceless beast Some called technology.

Tracy J. Hall

EMIPICY

You seem far away,

Over mountains and hills

The beauty between us could never compare.

To see you for a moment,

To have you embrace me,

It may sadden my heart,

But I must see you again.

My mind teases me with your face.

All the joy you give me in a single moment,

Could last me a lifetime.

It only makes me want you more.

Hot tears streaming down my face

As the realization hits me.

What was once there is gone.

Each time I see you, I save you in my heart.

My eyes fill with tears as your smile dances in my mind.

Every moment with you is tucked away,

deep inside of me.

If only our time together could last.

No one will know,
Or could even try to understand
all the hurt I feel when I must leave.
You and I are the only ones who understand.
With all the pain and anguish,

I still need you and still love you.

Marlena C. Balliett

"Spring Fashions"

INTRIGUE

Crocuses spying mischievously From behind the melting snow. DAFFODIL REVEILLE

Bugle most delicate, Proclaim the glory Of Fresh-blossomed Spring!

SUNBURST

O brilliant forsythia,

Siberian squills gaze

The Sol of Spring

Embodied therein!

Spring Candles

Ruby tulips, shining bright, Candles waxed and fair, Shed your bounce-bright light upon The vital, radiant air!

White Hyacinth

Chimes

Floral stars on emerald spikes That scent the air so dulcet.

Upon a fresh new world.

With eyes of Innocent blue

Baby Blue

Delicate bells of Spring, The Japanese quince blooms In dainty splendor. Spring Buds

Many bued nai

Many hued paintbrushes, Fresh buds wait, Poised to create A masterpiece.

> Flower picture by: Christine Babler

Floral Communion

Butterflies approach The soft, delicate chalices To receive their cups Of nectar-wine.

Amy Zimmerman

BEST FRIEND

The way I feel for you;
It's like I've been there every
Step of the way
Like I know you so well;
Like you're my best friend.

I truly care about you
So very much
And even though I don't know
You, I feel I do because I
See some of me in you.

I envy your hard work
And perseverance and faith in
God through it all.
I think you've had a harder life than
You'd like to let
People know.

I feel your emotions as
You sing them in your songs.
I love your style in songwriting and singing;
I always have,
Ever since vision of love
I identify the most with you
Of any singer
And I feel the same things
As you do
And that's why I feel like
You're my best friend.

ALAS

ALONE. WITH YOU BY MY SIDE. YOUR SOFT EYES FORTELLING THE FUTURE OF THIS MYSTIC EVENING. THE SCENT OF COLOGNE LINGERS UPON THE AIR. WHICH GROWS INCREASINGLY HEAVY WITH ANTICIPATION... OUR BREATHS BEGIN TO MINGLE AND THE INTENSITY MOUNTS. AS YOUR LIPS MEET MINE. TIME NO LONGER CONTINUES. WANDERING HANDS CARESS AS THEY EXPLORE... THE SOFTNESS OF YOUR LIPS BRUSH OVER MY SENSITIVE SKIN. SWEETLY TEMPTING, TEASING. FUELING A BURNING PASSION. THE DAWNING OF A LONGING, SO DEEPLY EMBEDDED. -CAUSED BY A WILDFIRE. IGNITED BY YOU. YOUR ARMS EMBRACE ME AS THE HEAT OF YOUR BODY MEETS MINE. TOURTURED BY THE GENTLENESS OF YOUR KISSES. MY HANDS CURL UPON YOUR BACK. -CONSUMED BY AN ACHING STIRRED DEEP WITHIN.

MY SENSES OVERWHELMED.
A WARM SENSATION AROUSED,
IGNITING A GENTLE SHAKING.
YOUR EYES AND YOUR LIPS

ONCE AGAIN GREET MINE

BEFORE OUR BODIES FULLY INTERTWINE.

A PASSIONATE UNION

FEEDING FROM A PRIMITIVE NEED.

A MOMENT IN TIME

WHERE TWO BECOME ONE.

WHERE TWO, A WHOLE, BECOME SO STRONG.

A MOMENT SHARED

WHEN TIME SEEMINGLY STOPS.

AS THE BREATHING SLOWS

AND CLENCHED HANDS UNWIND.

THE NIGHT SEEMS WELCOMING

THE STARS TWINKLING A BIT BRIGHTER.

MY KNEES STILL WEAK.

MY BODY STILL QUIVERING.

I NUZZLE MY FACE

IN THE WARMTH OF YOUR CHEST.

LISTENING

TO THE STRONG BEATING OF YOUR HEART.

YOU ARE TRULY A GENTLE GIANT,

FILLING A VOID

AND AROUSING BURIED EMOTIONS.

HERE I COULD REMAIN...

IN A PLACE IN TIME

WHERE TIME DOES NOT EXIST

AND I AM OVERWHELMED

BY YOUR WARMTH AND LOVE.

-SHANNON CLEMENTS





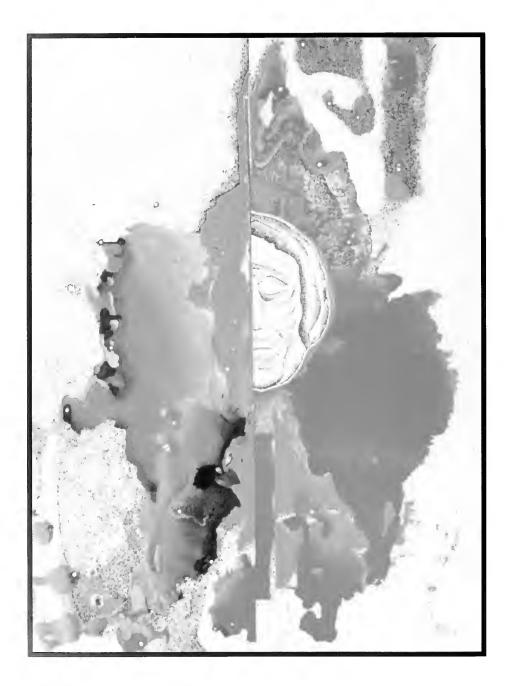












Dr. John Mischler



Jodi Paterno





America... The Beautiful?

Injustice

Ignorance

Morality...

the question

Hatred

Malice

Torture

Blood spilled

Children abused

Incestuous perversion

Thirsts quenched by the

raging flow

Racism

Sadism

Masochists galore

Pain...

the universal language

Melicent Salani

My First Night with You

I anticipated the moment when our souls would unite.
I feared it would not have been the fantasy stuck
on repeat in my mind.

There was nothing extravagant or secret rendezvous of seduction.

It was a gentle touch, a soothing sensation that filled me from head to toe like molasses fills a jar thick and smooth as it slowly coats and protects the inner walls.

I thought there would nave been tears of fear and frustration of regret.

It was peace of mind, body, and soul; a state
I knew I would never reach...

It was love.

All pre-conceptions and calculations were mere false pretenses, for I mistook what I thought would give me satisfaction.

My sweet prince of the ghetto became my knight in shining armor

Who would have thought you could be my everything? Nothing of what I thought I wanted, but delivered my every need.

You gave me love...

----Mook

WHAT WOULD YOU DO ...

If I told you "I love you"

What would you do...?

Would you run away from me?

Would you say that your heart belongs to someone else?

Or would you say I love you too?

If I told you I wanted to kiss your lips
What would you do...?
Would you say that your kisses belong to another?
Or would you return the kiss favorably?

If I told you my heart beats for you

What would you do...?

Would you ask me to redirect the pulse of your soul?

Would you say that someone else is the keeper of your heart?

Or would you give your heart to me explicitly?

If I told you that I wanted eternity with you
What would you do...?
Would you leave my life for always?
Would you tell me that you've promised eternity to someone else?
Or would you embrace my heart and soul and make this last forever?

~Z. Y. Martinez

EMOTIONALLY, WE'RE ON EMPTY, MOM!

How did you leave us, Mom?
Was it the galloping pneumonia suspected by the M.D.?
Did that turn out to be your best friend
At the very end? I heard it is.
Was it the weak ventricle in your heart?
Did it really burst, as Doc said it might?
What kind of pain or sudden surge of fear
Went through your chest, or mind, or body?
Or did you feel a sense of release?

When did you leave us, Mom? The Doc called before 6:00 AM To say you had gone. Emotional shock waves ransacked us! Only the night before you talked And made light, funny remarks. We did say, "Good night" but NEVER Did it cross our mind to say "Goodbye."

We even noted how beautiful the flowers Were in your room.
The next morning
Our collective six eyes gazed
Upon you-still warm.
The flowers drooped.
Did they know the answer?
Did the nurses know?
Did the doctor know?
Or was it a secret between you and God?

Why did you leave us, Mom?
We weren't ready for your departure.
We hung our heads and empty hears in pain
As we left that room.
And I realized the M.D. was right:
You had left it before we did.

Rev. Dr. Richard C. Ziemer

THINGS I WANT

 \mathcal{T}_0 love you and be loved.

 \mathcal{T}_0 feel your warm embrace.

To cry and have you ask why.

 \mathcal{T}_0 have you cry and tell me why.

 ${\mathcal F}_0$ have you paint me a picture in my

head of your favorite memory.

 \mathcal{T}_0 have me paint one for you.

 \mathcal{T} o sing and dance together.

 \mathcal{T}_0 lie on the grass and gaze at the stars.

 \mathcal{T}_{0} dance barefoot in the rain

In the middle of the field.

 \mathcal{T}_{0} talk of our dreams and of our expectations.

 \mathcal{J}_0 have you love me.

JUST LET ME BE

Just kiss me and let me nuzzle my round face in the warmth of your chest while you tangle your fingers in my curly locks.

tell me that you want to remain here, forever in this moment

that there are no preparations for the marrowno eyes need to bleed over pages of white sprinkled with pepper lettering

that there are no tears that need my kiss to soften their dagger of sorrow.

So that instead I may lend my eyes to the pink sky and watch as Mother Nature closes her eyes.

Let me lie in the arms of a man who exudes qualities unknown to others who share in his era

let me lay in his strong arms to share time and exchange smiles and exist as I may

in my own accord

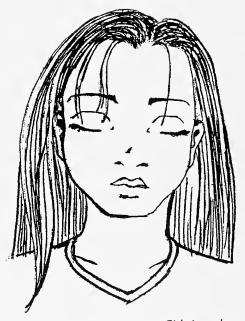
blossoming into womanhood spreading my butterfly wings ever so gently, yet with the power of a hurricane

all packaged into a small frame.

Just let me be

to share this moment in the safety of his arms under the pink of night.

-Shannon Clements



Girl picture by: Ann C. Anderes-Mullen

BLOOD LUST UNTO LOVE

You fill my life, my every thought.

Owning all parts of me, taking my soul.

As one we walk, through eternal darkness

You envelop my being, swallowing all of me.

Flesh yearning, for your searing touch.

Mind pulsing, to devour every piece of you.

You course through my veins, raging, sweet, and warm.

Bringing excruciating pleasure,

felt in the deepest recesses of my soul.

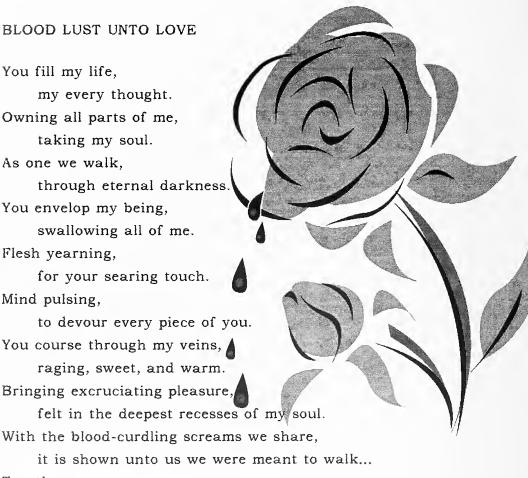
it is shown unto us we were meant to walk...

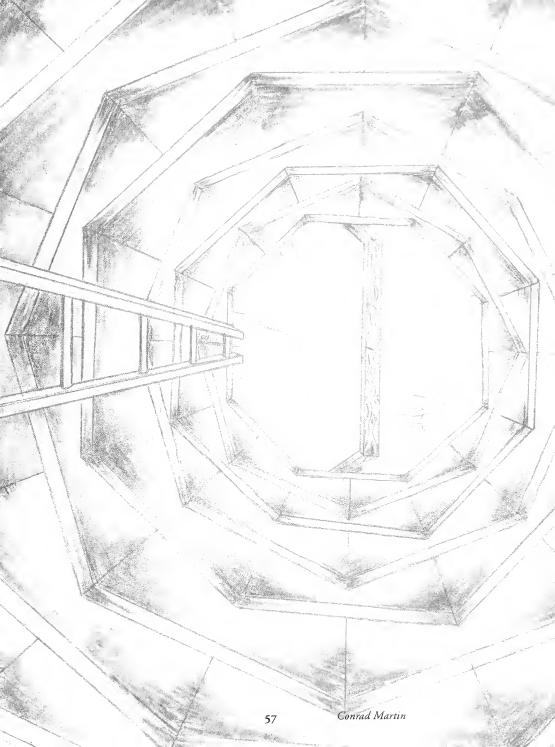
Together,

United,

as one.

Melicent Salani





MY TEARS WERE IN THE RAIN

I had a dream one night that you had
left my side and when I arose, your
presence had vanished.
You had slipped into the very existence
you had tried to oppress.
You failed to release your burdens to
A higher level and broke your covetous bond.
My tears were in the pond.

Time and time again, my friend, I tried to give you what you needed Yet you wouldn't accept it, for you did not understand or it didn't fit your rationale as if my unconditional love was fake.

I gave you signs when you asked and you brushed them off as mere coincidence.

My tears were in the lake.

I couldn't believe you had me in the places
your flesh chose
I cut my heart deep for you to say those
brutal words.
and feel so cold in the cruel, cruel
world.

You allowed yourself to be acceptable to its plea and tried to satisfy us in its debt.

I nearly quivered as my tears were in the river.

Why are you so stuck on what will
get you by?
Eros love and short term highs?
What makes you think you can
survive by denying your existence
and confusing who you are?
Did I not show your miracles?
How else would you have come this far?
I continue to give you the breath in your
lungs and the strength in your body.
What else do you need to see?
Is it not all done?
My tears were in the ocean.

Then I turned to my Father and asked him where you had gone and were you ever coming back home?

He said, "don't worry, my Son, for he just went down the block. The Holy Spirit is with him, Child, don't be in shock."

He assured me that you would come back to me as all your days ordained.

I couldn't help to express my joy by sending my tears in the rain...

---Mook

DREAMING

Dreaming can be frightening When you dream, All things are possible.

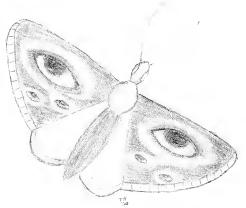
I love to dream...

However, it can be frightening
To imagine you have everything.
Have you dreamed without effort or struggle?

Is that frightening to you?

No dream is too good to be true...

-Z.Y. Martinez



Picture by: Tracy J. Hall

12TH AND CENTRAL

In the darkness. A child spoke And offered up a gift Of words dark and empty To match a heart the same. In the darkness, A child spoke In pained tongues Of fear and denial In a world beyond Hell. In the darkness. A child took comfort And sought even to smile Knowing none would see Dew fall from a cheek. In the darkness. A companion responded With gentle words To soothe a troubled soul -For blood runs thick From scars unhealed With darkness as a veil. But a child knows And fears the light Which shines with truth and mistrust _ For companions are vampires Who flee from the glare, Leaving wounds freshly opened To bleed in the sun. In the darkness, A child prays For Dawn to take refuge In a world far away, But Reality strikes Like the whore that she is. And somewhere in the darkness, A child speaks And says "The sun shall rise."



Tracy J. Hall

TRULY BLESSED

I honestly don't know how
I did itOr how you did it
For that matterHow I seem to have
Stumbled onto this
Great relationship
Where there's an
Equal amount of trust,
Love, forgiveness, and loyalty.

I must say
I've been truly blessed
To have met and to know
You.
For all the things you do,
And the ways you've influenced
My life.
For all the hard decisions
You've helped me through,
For all the times
You've
Been a shoulder to cry on

If I don't succeed at
Anything in my life;
My career, my family,
Personal relationships.
Nothing.
I'll know I've done right
By remaining best friends
With you
And that's all I'll
Ever need to remain the same
Throughout my life
In whatever I do.
Thank you.

LINDY'S GIFT

Janet Beagle

The day everything was to be divided according to the will, the child was told to go forth and choose a single item from the old house. There hovered about her milling aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, and cousins she had only heard about, faces she has seen only in pictures, names as distant as those from a book read long ago. The child moved through this crowd and looked at the articles strewn about. They were different, somehow, as though the life had fled them the day her grandmother left. They were no longer arranged in their usual locations, but heaped in neat segments for easy sorting, crowded together into a few large rooms so that the remainder of the house was left spidery and still. There was much bustle here in the front of the house, but even in the vortex of activity, the presence of the remaining rooms could not be ignored. They were felt in the airy pauses between words, noted in the hushed voices, whispered about as the remaining rooms were gutted. There was a solemn finality to it all. Once the items were dispersed, the old house was to be old, the profits split among those left behind. No one wanted to live in this old section of town anymore. Everything remaining was whittled down to its value. Reduced to calculable figures-dollars and cents to be split equally and legally-until one whole lifetime became nothing more than a small fragment of the economy.

Oh, it wasn't quite so cold as that, perhaps, but as the child moved from pile to pile, room to room, and back again, she intuitively knew, instinctively felt the undercurrent in the house-the hushed discussions of value, the quiet urgings of those about her. She heard behind her, and dodged the steps of paper and pencil, calculating, black-tied business suits, and briefcases. She reached a thin hand out to caress one intricately carved panel of a wooden desk, felt the soft texture of the finely hewn chairs, stroked the rich luster of a polished table. "That's a beauty there. Why that's got to be worth at least..." She moved on, weaving between the antique furniture, the hand blown glassware, the delicate figurines. She looked at her own reflection, distorted in the shining dip of a polished silver spoon. She studied her pixie face, puckering her pinched mouth into a perfect o. she furrowed her brow, watching as the reflection shifted and slid about on the smooth surface of the silver. There were those who felt she was too young for such a monumental task. Many had commented that such a young child should not be thus exposed to the harsh realities of life. Well-meaning busybodies suggested that the child be ushered outside until the business dealings were over. The child's inheritance should be determined by those who knew her needs, they said, those who could make proper investments, and then someday... but on this her guardians had stood fast. It was her grandmother's wish that the girl take one item of her own choosing, with no prodding or prying from other family members. It was not unfolding quite as planned, for no law could prevent meddlers from bumbling about the girl, exclaiming first one sentiment and then another with a great abundance of head nodding and finger shaking. But she was within the great old house at last, and though she wasn't sure just what she was seeking, she knew she would stumble upon it soon enough.

She looked at the perfectly matched sets of antique silver, watched the light dance in little droplets along its ridges as she carefully replaced the spoon she had removed. There were spoons from all over the world in this box. Grandmother had been a traveler in her youth, and she always returned with some small token, some finely etched silver spoon that spoke of mysterious places, dashing evening, gallantries...The child's eyes glowed for a moment as she recalled the fantastic stories her grandmother used to tell. How she loved to laugh and tell stories! Even when the child had been too young to understand some of them, she had always laughed too. Her grandmother had such a contagious laugh. Such fun...

The child moved again, then, around more boxes, some piled as tall as she, and then she found herself quite suddenly at the entrance to the hall. Her little steps padded lightly as she moved down the hall. It was suddenly very quiet and echoey away from the bustle of people at the front of the house. Everything looked different with the rooms so empty and still. Yet, it was still the same, somehow. One could almost recall the familiar scents - powder and sweet soap and gingerbread. Yes, when you parted your lips just slightly and breathed ever so shallow...She padded softly into the last room on the right. It had been her grandmother's bedroom. The large four poster bed had been removed, and the girl noted the bright spot on the rug where the dresser had stood; the sun had bleached the rug all around it. The sun had always shone in the room, from the large windows framing the corner of the house. It was still brightly lit, and with the white lace curtains removed, the scattered shadows that used to float across the floor were gone. It was still airy, light, and sweet, like the first breath after the cool summer rain when everything smelled sweet and fresh and new. Four deep prints remained where the legs of the over stuffed chair had rested. How many times she had sat in that chair, little feet not quite touching the floor, watching her grandmother prepare for an evening out, or reading to her, or - her eye caught the closet door and she moved to it, swung open the door. The shelves were all stripped bare with the boards removed and stacked against the wall. This had been her closet. What a store of wonderful things it had contained! All of grandmother's old clothing had been kept here. When she was tired of wearing something or it had worn out or gone out of fashion or, the girl realized with a smile, whenever she had taken a special liking to something, grandmother would announce with a flourish, " this looks like it belongs in Lindy's dress-up closet." And out it would come: out of the big double sliding door closet across the room and into the dress-up closet. Such hats and scarves and beads - oh, the assortment was ridiculous - but how beautiful they had made her feel! The two of them would dress up together. Sometimes grandmother would even allow Lindy to pick out her outfit, and no matter how outrageous the combination was, grandmother would don it with attentive care and a great show of preparation and excitement. Then they would have hot chocolate - that was always their favorite drink - and sip it bit by bit out of sandwiches cut into fancy bite size pieces for their luncheon date. The girl began to laugh again as she remembered the times they used to have. What times they were! Now, she shut the closet door, gently feeling the latch catch softly beneath her palm. She knew, suddenly, what it was she was going to take from this old house. She traced the path of the room again, lingering in the corner where that old stuffed chair had been. She remembered once asking her grandmother why the old chair was kept in her bedroom. "It's the most comfy chair you own, grandma. How come you don't have it in your sitting room 'stead of way back here?" And her grandmother had laughed, her whole face lighting up, her eyes glittering with mischief. "That old thing, Lindy dear? Why, it's so tattered and patched and worn."

"Yes, but it's the most comfy one in the whole house." The child said this with such stubborn self-righteousness that her grandmother had laughed again.

"Let me tell you a secret, Lindy." And Lindy had climbed up on her lap in the big old chair. "I keep my finest furniture in the front room for all the world to see and sit in and exclaim over, but the best furniture I keep hidden in the back so that it will be especially comfortable just for you and me."

Lindy had pondered that for a long time, sitting in that chair, until her grandmother had said, "If I moved this chair to the front, then we wouldn't be able to sit in it here. We wouldn't want that, would we?" And that, at least, had made perfect sense to her.

"I like it best right here, grandma."

She had laughed again, and kissed the top of her head. "So do I, Lindy, my dear."

A shout from the front room brought her out of her reverie. Lindy's chest heaved slightly. They were starting to look for her. She cast one last glance around the room, then pattered softly back down the hall. She knew now exactly what she would take from Grandma's house. She could almost feel the soft cushions, sense the warm embrace of so many days long gone, wrapped up in that old chair. She was certain the light and scent from this room would be preserved forever in the worn fabric. Yes. The finest of everything was displayed in front, Lindy reminded herself, but the best, the very best, Grandma had reserved just for her.

Now she only had to find it.





Christine Babler

The Gleaner

High School Writing Competition

The English Department
is very happy to have sponsored its third
high school writing competition,
which was designed to showcase the work
of young writers in the area.

We are amazed at the talent, sensitivity, and ear for language shown in their poetry and prose.

Our thanks and congratulations go to them, their families, and, of course, their English teachers!

L. M.

Lenka Kneschke Wissahickon High School Mrs. Fimiano Grade 10

A ragged trail of life
I drag behind me,
Frayed and shredded,
Is ripped and torn
With every step.

There's a solemn old man
Who walks behind me,
Quietly and expectantly,
Anxiously gathering
The fragments of life
I leave behind,
Longing for
The fundamental value
In the youth of the life
He once wasted away...

The particles relish
In his hand...
A chance to live again!

And the man tries
To treasure the remains
I skip over and neglect,
The remains in which
Life's true
Meaning and sentiment
Are hidden.

Naamah Razon Upper Dublin High School Grade 12 Dr. Sharon Traver

Beauty Queen

A teenage girl, Sits on the corner of the stool At the edge of the counter, One leg dangling to the floor, The other beneath her. Black shoes, black dress, red scarf. Wrapped around her pale neck-twice. Her auburn hair is pinned up, Twenty-two bobby pins stuffed into a bun. She hurriedly tucks the escaped tendrils behind her ear. A patch of freckles covers her nose, Little polka dots on smooth fabric. She bites her lip, pearly whites over tender pink, And looks down at her hands. Her fingers outline the counter top's grooves Repeating the same circular pattern cut into the glass-cut deep. "Six minutes," he said, "Be right back and I love you." She looked towards the clock and smiled-six minutes were up-Jumped off the stool and walked into the winter night, Shook her hair and laughed, locks blowing wildly Twenty-two pins falling to the pavement.

Thomas J. Bassinger North Penn High School 12th Grade Mrs. McPeak

A LITTLE LEAGUER'S DREAM

A little leaguer's dream

To play baseball

To swing a wooden bat

To feel the stinging sensation

Vibrating through my tingling body

Wrapping my hands around it for the first time

A surge of energy like electricity

Transforming me to a man

Connecting with the stitched leather

The smell of success

Overwhelms as I can hear the sound

Of a bat echoing

Like the rippling effect of a stone tossed into a pond

An object of my strengths

An object of my power

An object of my skill

Resembling my future

Its rigid smoothness interrupted

By scars

Marking the years of my childhood

And the rise and fall of my dream

Lindsay Mann Friends' Central School Mr. Vernacchio Grade 11

HIS PORCELAIN HEART

when he slept she would join his dream

the two would reach out under the sheet to find another hand

when she spoke his mind processed nothing

his chest would swell with warm devotion as he became lost in her face

he would walk the halls of his hotel

dazzled by the neon glow from the soda machine

he reached his room, swearing he could smell her as he climbed into bed

he would rise from the subway steps

gazing at the darkening sky

thinking about how bright she could make it

his absence from her arms never existed to begin with

but the man woke a day with space between his mind and her heart

found his hand at his side not hers

he stood up

took a step back

when she spoke his mind processed nothing

except the notion that he could hear surprisingly well

for the distance between them

he found himself staring with relentless apathy

at the finger-less ring discarded on the pillow

he reached out in dream

found no reception

so he lay and danced

with the memory of a moonlit missed chance

shattered his own porcelain heart into

hapless fragments on the bed

Ariel Lindorff Upper Dublin High School Dr. Sharon Traver 11th Grade

SATURDAY MORNING

It's a freezing Saturday in deep December. From my place in the open doorway, I can see the road, and on it the people on their bikes riding to work, school, or the town market. They're all hurrying, and not because they have a particular reason to rush. The bikers have simply found that pedaling furiously will keep them much warmer than sitting still in their apartments, comforted only by the tiny, regulation heater that is allowed in this specific countryside town outside of Xi'an, China.

I would love to have a bicycle, or a heater for that matter. But Ma's stall at the market doesn't bring in enough money for either, and she cries when I complain. I don't complain much to her, because I don't know how to comfort her when she's in tears, and it scares me.

Father says that my feet are more reliable than a bike any day, and that blankets will always last longer than electric heaters. I know he only says that out of pride, because if his daughter openly gawks at other people's luxuries, he will lose face. "We have what we have, Shan-Shan," he explains over and over, every day, even when I don't mention the subject at all. "It's enough." Sometimes I wonder who he's reassuring.

Today, like every other winter day, I am up long before dawn for my morning routine. I lay breakfast out on the table for Ma and Father, who are getting ready for work, and I begin to get dressed. Two pairs of pants and three sweaters, one over the other; my seat in school is close to the back of the room,

so far away from the squat little coal stove propped against the teacher's desk that I might as well be halfway across the world for all the heat that reaches me.

At about five o'clock I start on my daily trek to the schoolyard. In my neighborhood, there aren't many children. I'm very alone as I weave my way through the roadside collection of makeshift houses all much like my own. The houses look sad to me. Huge cracks between poorly fitted beams make the walls of the houses look injured, full of gaping sores that the weather can only make worse.

The road to school isn't short. I arrive at about five-thirty. Along with other students, I set about cleaning up the classroom: washing windows, sweeping floors and dousing them afterwards with a bucketful of icy tap water, lighting the coal stove so the teacher can keep warm. Already my fingers are frostbitten and sore, but in a while they'll be numb.

Our history class today is about some inventor, an American that came up with the idea of the light bulb. I wish I could do that; just come up with a wonderful, useful idea off the top of my head and wind up in history books, where everyone would know my name.

While I daydream, my history teacher paces around the room, glaring first at some unfortunate soul who happens to be in her line of vision, then at her notes on the blackboard. She's not in the best of moods.

Unfortunately, I fall into her line of attack. "Liang Shan!" Her voice rings against the plain concrete walls and I hope I've misheard. I haven't. "Tell me, what was the first invention of this Mr. Edison?"

I answer, "The light bulb." I haven't been listening, and it seems like my

best guess, I never get to find out if I was right.

"Look at me and stand when you answer. You've been in my class for six years now, you know my rules. Stand, look me in the eye, answer...and pay attention while I am teaching." She frowns disapprovingly at me, and I cower.

She turns, walks away, far away, to the front of the classroom and the warmth of the coal stove. I feel my fingers tingle, and I wonder what it would be like to have heat. The cold goes to my head, and I start to doze...just enough so that I completely miss the fact that my name has been called several times. The teacher is standing over me, menacing.

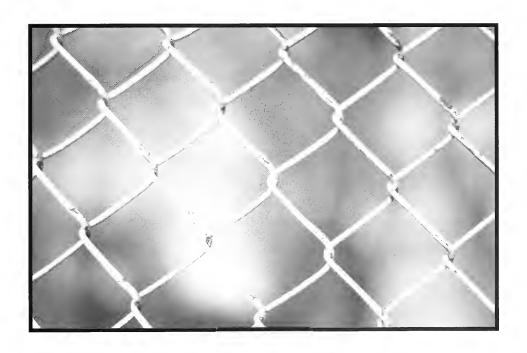
"You do not sleep in my class," she growls. "Even the students who come from decent homes and parents with respectable jobs seem to have no trouble paying proper respect in the classroom." She looms above my head, and I feel myself shrinking, drowning in my sweaters. "Go home," she says, slowly and deliberately. "And make a decision. Either learn how to stay alert in school, or learn to be a good butcher because that's the only option you'll have."

I leave, ashamed, stripped of my dignity. No one discusses my mother's job. Many of my classmates' parents teach at the university nearby. Mentioning my differences wasn't right of her, but there it is. It can't be undone.

I approach my home, and the houses by the roadside look cruel now, not injured. The beams in the walls and leaky roofs are like crooked teeth, grimacing, mocking, saying, "This is your place. This is what you will become." I shove open the door to my house, trying to vent my anger before I get inside. I lie on the bed for a time, thinking. By the time my parents get home, I am resolved.

I am going back to that school, and I am going to become something. I am going to America, or anywhere, someplace where I can become someone. I'll be a doctor, an engineer, someone indispensable, someone the world needs and can't ridicule. I have what I have...but I want more. It's not enough.

I tell Ma. After all, ambition is a useful thing to have, isn't it? She should be proud. But she only cries, and it scares me. I don't know why she is crying, and I can't comfort her.



Naamah Razon Upper Dublin High School Grade 12 Dr. Sharon Traver

THE NUT CRACKER

He sits there, on an old picnic bench, stained with many children's spills and artwork, mesmerized by mysterious forces, forces of age and wisdom. He meticulously works on cracking the many pecans, piled high in a basket, pecans that his now rough skinned hands planted into the rich soil. He is filled with stories, of immigrant boats and life in Argentina, of my grand-mother as a beautiful teacher, and of cows and chickens, but his serene face reveals nothing. Beneath those many wrinkles and sun caused freckles lies a heart made of dedication and patience, an enigma understood by few. He quietly continues to hammer the smooth, brown shells. His bruised and dried fingers grasp instinctively, tightly gripping his tool. His standards demand that each pecan must be removed exactly by his procedure. Crack lightly on the side, peel, and GENTLY remove the heart with the tips of the thumb and index fingers. The few remaining hairs on his scalp are moist from the sweat trickling down his sideburns. He never adapted to the hot Mediterranean sun.

"Yaaaaaaaacooooov!!!!!!" The high-pitched scream sounds form the kitchen. His composure remains unchanged; he continues to work.

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaoooooooooooo! COME HERE!" The frantic voice sounds again. With his Sony headphones, fitted comfortably on his balding head, he hears nothing of this panic. She marches out of the kitchen, hands placed firmly on her hips. The dress she wears, made of bits and pieces of surplus cloth; cloth used to make pajamas and dresses for her twelve grandchildren, reveals her swollen ankles. She is a woman of hard work and produc-

tiveness, of efficiency and rules, of results. Her white clogs cause a steady tapping, like a horse walking down a stone path. She hurries down the two marble stairs and begins lecturing, mechanically switching to Spanish, hoping another language will produce some impact, and cause different results.

He looks up at his wife, like an innocent child, unaware of his crime. He raises his eyebrows and smiles, his gleaming dentures sparkle. She glares back, emerald eyes trying to penetrate his equanimity. They have been married for fifty years, but still she possesses her frenzied ways, and he, his calmness. Ridiculing his obliviousness, the state of the kitchen, his clothes, his looks, her house, she rambles in a rage, slurring her words into a jumble of confusion and anger. He raises himself, revealing his pale, now tender legs, bulging with crimson and azure veins. She continues to bicker and complain, about life, money, children, him. He approaches her, his aged body moving slowly, not in pace with his heart and mind. His sky blue eyes gleam with energy, and he opens his massive arms, encompassing her frail physique. She turns away, determined to get her way, but in reality concealing her smile. He wraps his once muscular arms around her soft arms, which feel like a newborn's. Her baby powder aroma fills his nostrils, and young and old mix through his mind and memories, wondering where time disappeared.

She lets out a giggle. A youthful laugh, like the one that slipped through her stern lips the first time he held her hand. They stand there, arm in arm, for a moment. She lowers her head to his bony shoulder and sighs as they descend their bodies to the bench to recapture their breath. With their fingers intertwined, they sit. The couple with the old bones and young hearts.

Nina Salinger Upper Dublin High School Grade 9 Dr. Elizabeth Treat

ONE CHANCE

(This is meant to be read a stanza in column one, then a stanza in column two, and so on except for when the columns come together.)

She walks into the room timid and meek, stunned by his presence afraid to speak.

How relaxed he seems, and how gorgeous too, she can't help but wonder if he can see through.

Her body stands frozen to watch her spirit advance, it draws nearer and nearer, then asks him to dance. He stands there and fears the nearing footsteps he hears, but composes himself as her form appears.

She looks like a goddess, so calm and at ease.

He hopes she doesn't notice that he's weak in the knees.

His joints tighten up as panic sets in, but part of him moves forward as it sheds it's stiff skin.

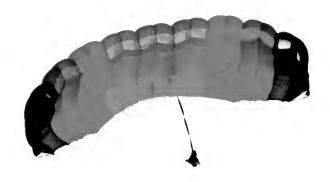
Then trumpets sound and lights dance around, as each spirit rejoices for the other it has found.

While each empty body, still several feet apart sees before it's eyes what it longs for in it's heart.

After one glorious moment of rapture and delight, her frozen skeleton melts as soul and body reunite. What wondrous warmth that filled him, had long ago passed, but something else was inside now, for his soul completed him at last.

With hope in her eyes she intended to see that fantasy and reality be blended, but to no avail; she was destined to fail for the ballad had already ended. Why hadn't he done it earlier? For that was the last slow dance. tied up in fantasies, the song passed by as did his only chance.







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